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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON SECRETARY RICE'S VISIT TO JORDAN

Summary

-- The visit of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Jordan and the region received extensive coverage in the Jordanian media. All papers published today, June 21, highlight excerpts from her speech at the American University in Cairo. A number of editorial commentaries view her "positive" remarks on Jordan's reform efforts.

Editorial Commentary

-- "The important visit of Mrs. Rice"

Daily columnist Tarek Masarweh writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (06/21): "Mrs. Condoleezza Rice found in Jordan only the reassuring feeling of being among friends. She found that she had no demands to make of Jordan, that she was offering a strategic alliance with Jordan, that she would not allow Jordan's security to be jeopardized in this region, and that her country is increasing its assistance to its strategic ally. The politicians would say that the American talk has to do with American policies in the region. This is true, but what could our country give to a country whose policy is to raid this region with its armies and to which everyone hurries to please? Even if we argue that the United States needs Jordan, then there is no shame in that, because it means that we have something that America needs. One who has a source of power should never apologize for it.. Mrs. Rice's visit to Jordan was very comfortable for her. People heard her utter clear criticism of Israel's settlement policies, offer us a strategic alliance, and say that Jordan's reform is exemplary."

-- "The 'black American tulip'"

Daily columnist Saleh Qallab writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (06/21): "When the U.S. Secretary of State praises Jordan's reform and considers it a model to be followed in the region, and when she says that her country refuses to have the interests of Jordan be jeopardized, she is not being courteous at all. She is relaying the U.S. administration's point of view. There are those marginal groups of people who thought that Jordan is facing a crisis with Washington, and thus have doubled their instigation efforts by providing the American press with fabricated and fake reports with the aim of encouraging American pressure against this country to force it to give up its principles. All campaigns launched by the American tabloids against Jordan are based on reports submitted by these marginal groups and parasitic persons who think that they can achieve their sickly dreams by inviting American pressures against Jordan and making it like some other Arab countries in the region. What is disgusting about this is the fact that some of the names that appeared in the articles of these American tabloids are ones who market themselves as being the knights of the confrontation with the United States, the proponents of anti-normalization with America and the pioneers of boycotting America in everything.. These sources thought that the American 'black tulip' is coming to unleash poisonous snakes against Jordan. These people should melt away in shame now that they have heard what Condoleezza Rice had to say."

-- "Inspector Condoleezza"

Daily columnist Sultan Hattab writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (06/21): "When Rice links the American desired reform with the American efforts in Iraq towards a free Iraq

and with the American efforts in Palestine towards a two-state solution, then Rice's words about reform would require tangible credibility, because the reform of this region cannot happen unless there is a just solution for the Palestinian-Israeli struggle. In Palestine, Rice spoke about the roadmap. Sharon, however, is on a different sheet of music as he talks about a different way of redeployment from Gaza, about a different viewpoint of settlements, and as he hinders all components for a possible and practical solution.. In Egypt, Rice discussed the Egyptian elections and spoke in detail about electioneering, maps, candidates and methods, as if she were setting an Egyptian elections law.. In Jordan, her evaluation for Jordan's achievements was very positive.. Rice's 'certifications' are the important thing now. Those she cited have won, and those she did not cite are waiting to pay a huge cost. The regimes in the region are no longer able to run to the people, since the cost they must now pay is the very consequence of the way they have dealt with their people.. Rice knows Arab courtesy. What she said in [Arab] capitals she visited was not marked by the same bluntness that she used in Moscow and China as she sought to speak to the people of these two countries through their regimes. In the Arab capitals, she wanted to make her hosts listen, because she knows that the Arab people's stand is marked by hatred for the American policy; hatred caused by that policy's bias in favor of Israel and a policy that drove the people of this region away from their regimes. So she opted to ease her criticism of the Arab internal policies . because when she goes back home, she will use American media to cast stones at the Arab regimes' glass. Rice's words against the Arab regimes seems to be the harshest because she is finding that the dough of Arab regimes is beginning to form under American pressure, even if Iraq does not become free and Palestine does not become a viable state!"

-- "Impetus needed"

Centrist, influential among the elite English daily Jordan Times (06/21) editorializes: U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit to the region should provide impetus to the stalled peace process in the Middle East. All signs indicate that the peace drive is not only stalled but threatened to cease entirely unless the projected talks between Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas bear fruit. Sharon still insists that Abbas disarm all the Palestinian militant factions operating on Palestinian soil and destroy their infrastructure. Abbas is on record as unwilling or unable to do that for fear that such a move against Palestinian militants would provoke a bloody civil war.. Hamas and other Palestinian hardliners declared their unwillingness to lay down arms until they see real progress on the ground. It is a vicious circle that no side is willing break.. The search for a just and durable peace in the Middle East needs a powerful thrust and that, it is no secret, can only come from Washington. It may, therefore, require more than a visit or two by the secretary of state to the region, and genuine desire and effort to help find a solution, before peace finally comes in our midst."

HALE